

ERIC LESTER

Mr. Bruce Crawford	Office	Date Aug. 10, 1940
from Jeanette M. Dilley	Office	Referring to
Subject		File

Separate sheet for each subject. Omit all formalities. For office letters only.

I have held this manuscript several days waiting to get the picture to send with it, but it seems to be taking them an unusually long time to get them developed, so I am sending it on without the picture. Will send it another time.

Wanita J. Dilley  
Glover Mich, W. Va.  
POCAHONTAS COUNTY  
Chapter 6 section 1 b  
August 10, 1940

SETHEL CHURCH ---BUCKLEY

Just when the Methodist Protestant Church was first introduced into the Greenbrier Valley, there are no records to show. But as early as 1842 there was a well organized and prosperous circuit in this valley. On the roll of the quarterly conference were the names of many of the most prominent and influential citizens of the valley.

Perhaps the oldest society in Pocahontas county is at the Bethel Church in Buckeye, a small village a few miles down the valley, from Marlinton. It is related that when the first Methodist Protestant minister came into this community, he was refused the privilege of preaching at the same place where the M. E. ministers had been holding services. Whether this was at a private house or public meeting house is not related. Mr. John Buckley, not a church member, invited this new preacher to preach at his house. The invitation was gladly accepted, and a housefull of people came to hear this "new kind of Methodist" preach his first sermon in that community. The people were so well pleased that a number of unconverted men went to work at once and built a log house in which to hold services. John Buckley donated the lot and James Rogers rived the shingles for the roof. James Rogers was afterwards a zealous and devout adherent of this church.

As soon as the meeting house was completed the new minister held a revival meeting and many of the men who had helped to build the house were converted, and became charter members of the society; that was formed at the close of the meetings. While the revival was in progress seventeen of the young people left a prayer-meeting at the M. E. Church and attended the revival services. For this act they were expelled from the M. E. Church. Then the M. M. Class was formed these 17 and eighteen others (35 in all) who had formerly been members of the M. E. Church, joined the new society formed at the new log church, then known as Buckley Church, but now called Bethel.

The oldest records show that Bethel Church had more than one hundred members in 1823; among them were many of the most prominent citizens of the community. The Overholt, Buckley, McNeill, Rogers and McKeever families were leaders in the society. Old Bethel church has given to the conference two itinerant ministers and a few local preachers of ability. Dr. A. L. McKeever and his half brother Rev. Moore McNeill, were members here. Three ministers have come from the membership of Bethel church: Mrs. Rev. D. W. Loggs, who was Sabine Leishley Buckley, named for Dr. Leishley's wife; Mrs. Rev. M.M. Sverly, who was a Miss Overholt; Mrs. Rev. B. L. Mitchell, who was Miss Elizabeth Frances Pennell. Joshua Buckley, Jonathan McNeill, James Rogers, William Mulliffe, Nellie Rogers, Elizabeth Fleming, Ruth Kee, Polly Kee, Angeline McNeill, Lucy Buckley, and Polly Buckley were some of the early members at Bethel. George McKeever, "Aunt Nancy McNeill," Mrs. Fordell, Mr. and Mrs. William McNeill and Mr. and Mrs. John Buckley are among the older members now. (1886)

The present house of worship at Buckeye was built under the patronage of Rev. George W. Barrett, and Rev. M. L. Smith assistant, in 1882. It is a neat, commodious, frame building, and very creditable to the community and to the Methodist Protestant denomination.

The Greenbrier Valley has produced many able and distinguished ministers. And to old Bethany Church at Buckeye, belongs the honor of having given to the West Virginia conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, one of its prominent and successful ministers, who for than forty years was active in the work of the conference.

Dr. McKeever was born July 24, 1844. He united with the Methodist Protestant Church at Buckeye in 1866, and was licensed to preach by the quarterly conference of the Pocahontas circuit. He was admitted to membership in the annual conference with that senior class of 1871, six of whom served as presidents of the conference in succession: B. Stout, A. L. McKeever, D. G. Helmick, B. C. Wesse, J. M. Conroy and E. J. Wilson.

Brother McKeever served many of the leading charges of the district, including: Harrison, Lewis, Georgetown, Buckhannon, Marion, Mt. Morris and Flemington circuits. He served two years as president, and was several times a delegate to the General Conference sessions. He preached his first sermon on Beaver Creek.

Dr. McKeever married Miss Sarah Young. One of his sons Dr. Otto B. McKeever, is a distinguished minister of the M. P. Church, and a fervent lecturer.

From-----The Methodist Protestant Church  
in West Virginia----Rev. I. A. Barnes D.D.  
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An old church record kept by John Buckley shows that in 1841 Thomas W. Isherwood was the pastor of the Buckeye church. John B. Buckley who now has the record says that he is of the opinion that Isherwood was the first minister to serve this church, and was probably the one who was refused permission to preach in the M. E. church. He says that the Methodist Episcopal were very strict at that time and never permitted any one of another denomination to use their church, and for this very reason they lost their influence in the community and for a time had very few members. Finally a man by the name of Harper was sent to take over the pastorage, he allowed them some liberality and succeeded in organizing a right good class, but it was never as strong as it had been before they expelled some of the members for going to the Methodist Protestant meeting.

According to this record, the next minister, to follow Isherwood, was William Bolton. It gives the class list for 1841 as follows:

William H. Lindsey (probably Lindsey)

Paul Lindsey

Mary Cusey,      Outlip Geiger,      Sarah Geiger,

James S. Johnson,      Elizabeth Barlow,      Hough A. Sharp,

Virginia F. McNeill,      Mary B. Moore,      Henry Moore,

Francis Harper,      William Harper,      Jonathan McNeill,

Milred McNeill,      William W. McNeill,      Rachel Thomas,

Jenny Kennison,      William Collins,      Charles Collins,

Samuel Collins,      John Cassell,      Mary J. Cassell,

Margaret Gunn,      James Gunn,      Mabrife Gunn,

Mary J. Hinch,      Sarah Johnson,      Eliza Johnson,

Samuel W. Moore,      Melrose,      A. M. Gordon,

1841-1842

Washington Sharp, Nicholas Sharp, Samuel Grimes,  
 George Lightner, Henry Lightner, Sarah Lightner,  
 Susannah Lightner, James Moore, Margaret Moore,  
 David Grimes, Mary Grimes, Robert Sharp, Mary Sharp,  
 Arthur Sharp, Betty Sharp, Andrew Grimes, Margaret Grimes,  
 Anthony Lightner, Eleanor Lightner, David Lightner,  
 Alar Lightner, Rachel McClure, George McLaughlin,  
 Sarah McLaughlin, Elizabeth McCordle, James McCordle,  
 John McCordle, Samuel Gibson, Thomas Eggeatt,  
 Jacob Shinsberry, Margaret Shinsberry, Anna Shinsberry,  
 Peter Shinsberry, Jesse Gregory, Mary Ellen Buckley,  
 Joshua Buckley, Lucinda Buckley, Ruth Eliza Buckley,  
 Elizabeth Buckley, Harmon Sharp, William Sharp,  
 Hough Calvin Sharp, Mary Ellen Sharp, Clarissa Bolton,  
 Elizabeth Bolton, Aea Shinn McNeill, Rachel Kellison,  
 Martha Kellison, James Kellison.

From this class list, one can easily see that this  
 new kind of Methodism attracted people from the surrounding  
 countryside for a radius of many miles, from Browns Creek, Poage  
 Lane, Elk and many other communities. This list, however, does not  
 give the names of the Overholts, Kannelle and McKeever <sup>and Rogers</sup> who were  
 all loyal members. Perhaps they did not join until a later date.

Mr. Buckley says that all of those who were expelled  
 from the M. S. church, remained loyal members of the M. P. church,  
 never returning to the M. S. church. He said that in 1853 there  
 were 105 members in the Bethel church at Buckeye but that later  
 they sent in some uneducated preschere and the people got so  
 discouraged and disgusted because they could not compete with the  
 other churches that they drifted off. Only a few remained loyal.

Then they sent in better preachers for a while, but they were never able to build up the class again. Claiborne McNeill held the Sunday School together for many years during the time that the uneducated preachers were there.

There has been no Methodist Protestant minister at this church for the last ten years, and at the present time (1940) there are only five members.

Mrs. Susan McNeill,

Mrs. Nancy McNeill,

Mrs. Lottie Pennell,

Mrs. Margaret Thomas,

and John B. Buckley.

Mr. Buckley says that none

of them are able to get out to church because of their age. All of the younger members have joined some other denomination.

According to Prices' History, Moore McNeill, the youngest son of William the teacher, became a preacher, and entered the itineracy of the auspices of the Methodist Protestant Church, and traveled many years with marked success and acceptance in the counties of West Virginia bordering the Ohio River.

Aza Shinn McNeill was also a preacher, but for some reason never took a regular circuit. He, however was considered a very able preacher, often substituting for other ministers and Presiding Elders.

Mr. Buckley says that as far back as he can remember, the Presbyterians have used this church, with Dr. Dunlap, Davis Gidenstricker and Wm T. Price as their earliest preachers. No doubt the same ones that served other Presbyterian churches also preached to this Presbyterian class at Buckeys. The first Presbyterian members at this church were the McClintons. For many years this church has been served by the Presbyterian minister from the Marlinton church.

It is found that the amount of water in the soil is  
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